

PROGRAMA C

SEBASTIÁN MÚNERA

Crime and Ornament: False
Freedom, False Capture



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Gallery C

1.

The constellation is drawn out of many flashes. When Pablo Escobar was caught, his still-warm body was captured in a photo. The violence of seeing a violent man violently captured is domesticated thanks to the distancing of photography. The warm corpse becomes shareable, everyone has a piece of it. Animals hunted by the powerful are registered in the same way, their picture taken with the trophy.

Several years before his death, Pablo Escobar had a collection of animals from Africa and other distant lands delivered so that he could build his own theme park at Hacienda Nápoles. He wanted to recreate the animals' original habitat—their freedom—with greater fidelity than a zoo. Nonetheless, the hippos escaped the park into the Magdalena River, and the giraffes died, unable to adapt to an environment where they didn't belong.

Whenever we seek to emulate freedom, we falsify it with ornaments and artifice. Never is the act of capturing complete: it is never represented with justice. An image of the past cannot bring the past back. Escobar's capture did not bring an end to drug trafficking.

There is something in the impulse to see that originates in an impulse to control (Paul Virilio and Susan Sontag): Modern man aspires to stop time, to be able to divide the continuum, to separate himself from the world and observe it from above, looking down onto a world where everything can be managed. The figure of the panopticon is an architectural example of this anxiety: men aspire to a bird's-eye view and to overcome their limitations.

2.

Sebastián Múnera's interest in creating the project *Crime and Ornament: False Freedom, False Capture* began with the realization that, what had once been Pablo Escobar's private zoo, is today the plot of land where El Pesebre prison sits: in this work, the artist draws a link between the notion of capture shared by both compounds.

Previously, Múnera's work was known for his interventions in libraries and zoos. The strategy of carrying out interventions—in places that collect and display their collections to the public—has become an excuse for spending time there and creating an intimate relationship with the space from which an idea for a story emerges. Thus, his series of library interventions came to a close with his first feature film, *La torre* [The Tower], shot in the Piloto Public Library in Medellín. Likewise, the filming of the cinematic piece that we see in this exhibition marks the end of the artist's extended period of zoo interventions.

His experience making a film and his time spent working in zoos are two factors that led Múnera to think about the gaze. Zoos, in particular, also allowed him to think about ornament, the construction of artificial spaces (scenery) and something he calls "animal dramaturgy." The zoo cages—cells—capture the natural (the animals) while also capturing the viewer's gaze.

On one occasion, the artist made eye contact with a giraffe, and the animal responded by leaping. That experience of being watched by the captive brought him to consider the gesture of capturing images for film, of the "viewing device," and of capturing time in a moving image: almost all human gestures have to do with capturing something, with seizing what moves and mollifying it, with dividing the continuous.

The confirmation that what we see looks back at us piqued Múnera's interest in the animal that shared his experience, so he undertook an investigation of its origin. He discovered that the Greeks called the giraffe a leopard camel (*Giraffa camelopardalis*) because of the physical similarities it shares with these two mammals. This way of producing a new combination, through the union of two dissimilar things, resembles the idea of montage in cinema: everything can be superimposed; human beings are always open to the infinite recombinations of whatever material they have at hand.

Múnera built his book *El salto de la jirafa* [The Giraffe's Leap] on this idea of montage: he provides the reader with several images that reflect on the gaze (through what Múnera calls "thought images") so that he or she can arrange them their way within a constellation of possibilities. In this sense, the materials provided in the book are prompts, rather than fixed scripts, and it is the reader who assembles the montage.

Like libraries or museums, zoos capture, they shelter, and this gesture of capturing, or the staging of the capture, is what interests the artist. Whether they are books, animals or works of art, the driving question remains, what does it mean to gaze upon what is held in captivity? How does the captive see, how does it return the gaze? What interests is to show how the viewing device expands (cinema as an institution, or other entities like libraries, zoos or museums), how the viewing device is based on capturing, and how the basis of Western culture is capturing.

3.

The story built by this project also portrays some of the pleasures that take place within the framework of crime. For Múnera, it seems paradoxical that those who go to Nápoles can enjoy the ruins of drug trafficking. Knowing that the Hacienda is a place where dismembered bodies are buried, there is something macabre, says the artist, in the fact that today it is a place destined for casual, healthy recreation.

The women we see on the screen frequent El Pescbre prison to make conjugal visits, but one day, they take the day off to enjoy the adjoining safari-water park.

The installation presented in the exhibition space makes reference, through its materials, to ornamental representations of falsified nature and perpetual surveillance.

Sebastián Múnera (Bogotá, 1989)

A Colombian artist and filmmaker, Múnera graduated from the Visual Arts program at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Medellín. He explores every medium, from filmmaking and installations, to architectural interventions. His work has been exhibited both in museums and film festivals. His feature film *La torre* premiered worldwide at the 47th Rotterdam International Film Festival, in the Bright Future section, and it was an official Colombian Cinema selection at the 58th Cartagena de Indias International Film Festival. In 2017, he was invited by the Georges Pompidou Art Center for an artist residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts (Paris). Múnera is the winner of the Incuba Altiplano Prize of the International Auteur Film Symposium (2014) and of the Humberto Solás Cinema Under Construction Grand Prix, XIII FICGibara (Cuba). He participated in the II Latin American Colloquium of Non-Object Art and Rural Art at the Museo de Arte Moderno of Medellín and in the exhibition *Taller de construcción* within the framework of the MDE11. In 2018, he received a Solo Exhibition Scholarship from the Ministry of Culture, and in 2017, he received the Mid-Career Artist Creative Scholarship from the Medellín City Hall. In 2012, he received the Ruta N Award in Recognition of Outstanding Research by a Young Person in the field of arts and culture.

Éricka Flórez (Cali, 1983)

An exhibition curator, a writer and an arts publication editor, Flórez graduated in Psychology (2008) and specialized in History and Theory of Modern and Contemporary Art (2010). She is a co-founder of *La Nocturna*, an independent artistic platform based in Cali that experiments with discursive and pedagogical formats, and of *Casa en el Aire*, an experiment in arts education for children and families. In 2012, along with Juan Sebastián Ramírez, she won the curatorial research grant awarded by the Colombian Ministry of Culture. Between 2011 and 2013, she was part of the work team at *Lugar a Dudas*. Her work has been presented at Museo Experimental El Eco (Mexico City, 2014), the 43rd (inter)National Colombian Artist Salon (Medellín, 2013), at the 12th Performance Festival of Cali (2012), and Manifesta 11, among others. She curated *Testigo de oídas: Rumor y documento*, Museo La Tertulia (Cali, 2014), *Puse un bechizo en el espacio: Mitos y economía de clima caliente*, Museo La Tertulia (Cali, 2015), *El buco que deja el diablo*, The Project Room, Universidad de los Andes (Bogotá, 2014). Her writing has been published in places like Revista Errata, Arcadia, Terremoto: Contemporary art in the Americas, and the USB Map Initiative blog for the Guggenheim Museum.

Programa C aims to underscore MAMM's and Celsia commitment to contemporary artistic creation through a series of curatorial investigations, processes of follow-up, and exhibitions produced and presented in MAMM's Gallery C. This program seeks to promote and stimulate production among emerging Colombian artists and to provide a space for discovery and enjoyment of the most recent artistic practices.

Video Credits

Screenplay and Direction: Sebastián Múnera

Characters: Manita and Prince (Estefanía Cardona and Yenifer Andrea Vasco)

Photography: Arlene Muller

Art and Costumes: María Camila Castrillón Del Gallego

Audio Recording: Juan Lugo

Sound Design: Daniela Cano

Field Production: Mauricio Reyes

Production: Mutokino

Producer: Felipe Guerrero - Sebastián Múnera

Production Manager: Adriana Agudelo

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